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Application No. 09/864,525

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

A detailed listing of all claims that are, or were, in the present application, irrespective of whether the claim(s) remains under examination in the application are presented below. The claims are presented in ascending order and each includes one status identifier. Those claims not cancelled or withdrawn but amended by the current amendment utilize the following notations for amendment: 1. deleted matter is shown by strikethrough for six or more characters and double brackets for five or less characters; and 2. added matter is shown by underlining.

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1-126. (Cancelled).

Please add new claims 127-146 as follows:

127. (New) A method of automatically conducting an auction for bidding on a location-specific service through at least one communication network, said method comprising:

receiving, by an auction management system over a communication network, a bid request for bids on providing a service, the bid request being transmitted via a global positioning system (GPS)-enabled terminal and including at least positional information related to a geographic location for rendering of the service;

executing, by the auction management system, an auction program that automatically solicits bids responsive to the bid request over a communication network;

receiving, by the auction management system over a communication network, bids in response to the auction program, each bid including:

positional information representing a current geographic location of a prospective service provider associated with that bid, the current geographic location being automatically determined via a GPS-enabled terminal; and

current situational information specific to the prospective service provider, the current situational information including automatically-gathered information, other than the positional information, relevant for determining any potential delay associated with rendering of the service by the prospective service provider; and

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analyzing the bids, by the auction management system, to identify at least one favorable bid based on the positional information and on the current situational information of each bid, and identifying a group of at least one successful bidder associated with at least one of the at least one favorable bid.

128. (New) The method of claim 127, wherein receiving the bids by the auction program comprises receiving bids corresponding to a plurality of prospective service providers that are employed by different paid transportation services companies.

129. (New) The method of claim 127, wherein receiving the current situational information includes receiving at least one information item selected from the group consisting of: whether the transportation automobile is on a mission, whether the transportation automobile is on the move to a customer, whether the transportation automobile is in the process being washed, whether the transportation automobile is lacking fuel, whether the transportation automobile is in the process of being fueled, whether the transportation automobile operator is on a break, or any combination thereof.

130. (New) The method of claim 127, wherein analyzing the bids further comprises:

identifying at least one successful bid from among the bids, including comparing attributes of the service providers to at least one narrow-down condition.

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131. (New) The method of claim 130, wherein comparing the attributes of the service providers includes comparing the attributes to at least one narrow-down condition selected from the group consisting of: services offered by the service provider, a quality of services offered by the service provider, a rating of the service provider, a price offered by the service provider, or any combination thereof.

132. (New) The method of claim 127, wherein analyzing the bids further comprises:

identifying the at least one favorable bid based on information acquired from at least one source other than the bid in addition to the positional information and the current situational information acquired from the bid.

133. (New) The method of claim 132, wherein identifying the at least one favorable bid based on information acquired from sources other than the bid includes analyzing at least one information item selected from the group consisting of: traffic information, construction information, weather information, or any combination thereof.

134. (New) The method of claim 127, further comprising:

presenting the group of at least one favorable bidder associated with the at least one of the at least one favorable bid to a customer for selection by the customer.

135. (New) The method of claim 127, wherein analyzing the bid further comprises:

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automatically selecting, from the group of at least successful bidder associated with at least one of the at least one favorable bid, a single successful bidder.

136. (New) An auction management system for automatically conducting an auction for bidding on a service through at least one communication network, said system comprising:

an auction server communicatively coupled to at least one communication network, the auction server programmed to:

receive a bid request for bids on providing a service, the bid request being transmitted via a global positioning system (GPS)-enabled terminal over the at least one communication network and including at least positional information related to a geographic location for rendering of the service;

execute an auction program that automatically solicits bids responsive to the bid request over the at least one communication network;

receive, over the at least one communication network, bids in response to the auction program, each bid including:

positional information representing a current geographic location of a prospective service provider associated with that bid, the current geographic location being automatically determined via a GPS-enabled terminal; and

current situational information specific to the prospective service provider, the current situational information including automatically-gathered information, other than the positional information, relevant for determining any potential delay associated with rendering of the service by the prospective service provider; and

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analyze the bids to identify at least one favorable bid based on the positional information and on the current situational information of each bid, and identify a group of at least one successful bidder associated with at least one of the at least one favorable bid.

137. (New) The auction management system of claim 136, wherein the prospective service provider provides paid transportation services.

138. (New) The auction management system of claim 136, wherein the current situational information includes at least one information item selected from the group consisting of: whether a transportation automobile is on a mission, whether the transportation automobile is on the move to a customer, whether the transportation automobile is being washed, a fuel situation of the transportation automobile, whether the transportation automobile is being fueled, whether an operator of the transportation automobile is on a break, or any combination thereof.

139. (New) The auction management system of claim 136, wherein each bid further includes at least one road situation information item selected from the group consisting of: whether one or more roads are affected by construction, whether one or more roads are affected by traffic congestion, or any combination thereof.

140. (New) The auction management system of claim 136, wherein the prospective service provider operates local sensors adapted to automatically gather current situational information.

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141. (New) The auction management system of claim 140 wherein the sensors are adapted to sense at least one condition selected from the group consisting of: an amount of fuel in a transportation automobile, an indication based on operation of a fare meter associated with the transportation automobile, a presence of passengers in the transportation automobile, whether a transportation automobile operator is on a break, a duration of a transportation automobile operator break, or any combination thereof.

142. (New) The auction management system of claim 136, wherein the auction program is further adapted to:

identify at least one successful bid resulting from a comparison of at least one service provider attribute to at least one narrow-down condition.

143. (New) The auction management system of claim 142, wherein the at least one narrow-down condition includes at least one condition selected from the group consisting of: services offered by the service provider, a quality of services offered by the service provider, a rating of the service provider, a price offered by the service provider, or any combination thereof.

144. (New) The auction management system of claim 136, wherein the auction program is further adapted to:

identify the at least one favorable bid based on information acquired from sources other than the bid in addition to the positional information and the current situational information of each bid.

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145. (New) The auction management system of claim 144, wherein the information acquired from sources other than the bid includes at least one information item selected from the group consisting of: traffic information, construction information, weather information, or any combination thereof.

146. (New) The auction management system of claim 136, wherein the auction program is further adapted to provide a presentation of the at least one favorable bid to an originator of the bid request, wherein the presentation includes an information set selected from the group consisting of: at least a subset of the at least one favorable bid, and an identification of a single successful bidder from among the at least one favorable bid.